

12th Legislative District

ARMSTRONG REPORT

From Rep. Mike Armstrong



**Representative
Mike Armstrong**

2008 Legislative Update

- Operating budget presents concerns
- \$2.5 million comes home for local projects
- Farm bills successful
- College book bill a near miss
- Taxpayers defended against misguided tax hikes

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Rep. Mike Armstrong

Dear friends and neighbors,

We completed the 60-day legislative session March 13 in Olympia. This short session provided some successes for our 12th District folks, and gave us the opportunity to lay the foundation for major legislation next year.

I successfully fought against several tax and fee increases proposed by Olympia bureaucrats. We also provided important loan funds for public works projects in Mansfield and Grand Coulee.

A bill I introduced to help college students buy their books earlier so they can get a more competitive, lower price passed the House, but died in the Senate in the final hours of the session. I had also hoped for additional property tax relief, but those efforts were rebuffed in this short session. My fight will continue to lower your property tax bills.

I appreciate all of your phone calls, e-mails and letters. It is a great honor to serve you. Please contact me any time you have questions, ideas or suggestions related to state government.



Rep. Mike Armstrong

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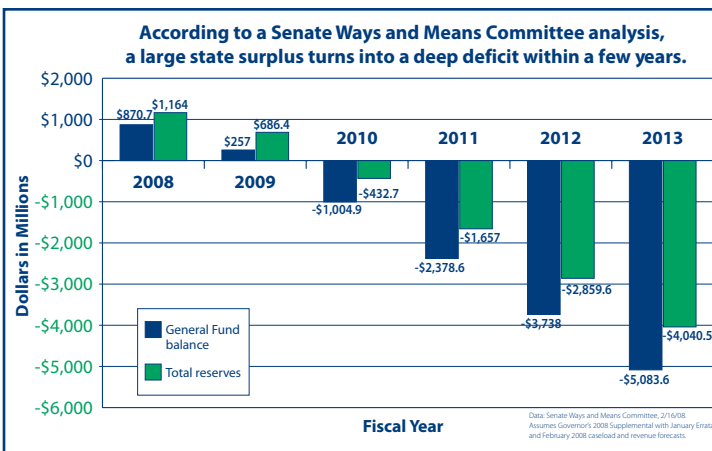
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Budget spends deeper toward deficit

The supplemental budget is supposed to make corrections in the two-year operating budget the Legislature approved last year, such as addressing unanticipated costs or emergency needs. It is not supposed to provide additional spending for new programs. Unfortunately, it seems the Legislature still cannot control its level of spending. The supplemental operating budget approved this year increases spending by more than \$291 million at a time when we can least afford it.

The February revenue forecast came in \$423 million lower than expected. If the housing market further declines while oil prices rise, we could see an additional reduction of incoming state revenue.

The economics of a state budget should work the same as our family budgets. The reality is that you cannot spend more money than you take in. Yet in the past five years, state spending has increased by 33 percent while revenues continue to fall. At this rate, the Senate Ways and Means Committee predicts Washington will face a \$5 billion budget deficit by 2013.



There are only two ways to get out of a deficit, and that's to cut spending or raise taxes. We're already taxed enough. It's time to put bloated state government on a diet and stop the feeding frenzy of your taxes.

Local pages help around the House

I'd like to thank my legislative pages who helped in the operations of the House of Representatives this year. They include Karen Jans of Wenatchee, Ryan Houston of Okanogan, Samantha Varrelman of Pateros, and Hannah Hassinger of Leavenworth.

Paging presents students with a unique educational opportunity to participate in the legislative process. Their duties vary from ceremonial tasks, such as presenting the flags, to operational chores like distributing amendments. Each page spends one week in Olympia and often lives with host families. Plus they get paid for their work!

If you have a son or daughter who is at least 14, but has not yet turned 17, contact my office about getting them involved as a page. For more information about our page program, go online to: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/House/PageInternProgram>.



Karen Jans



Ryan Houston



Samantha Varrelman



Hannah Hassinger

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Defending taxpayers against ill-conceived tax increases

In Olympia, there's no end of imaginative ways to try to separate you from your money. Frequently, tax-increase proposals come from Seattle-area lawmakers, who promote "One Washington" while seeking to collect more taxes from the rest of Washington's citizens. Apparently, they have no clue how other people live, work and raise their families outside of King County.

A prime example is Senate Bill 6900. Sponsored by four Democrat legislators from King County and one from Vancouver, this measure would have imposed a "vehicle engine displacement and emissions fee" ranging from \$70 for a 2-liter engine to \$600 for engines of 8 liters or more. The Office of Financial Management projected the cost to taxpayers as high as \$1.7 billion over five years — potentially devastating to middle- and lower-income folks in North Central Washington.

I had more e-mails, letters and telephone calls on this legislation than nearly any other issue this session. Although the bill did not come to the House for consideration, it was a no-brainer to me. I would have happily voted against this measure. That said, I'm glad it died long before it had an opportunity to reach the House. Your input helped to kill this bill!

I appreciate hearing from you on this and the other issues that come before the Legislature. We need to keep ever vigilant against those in Olympia who want to take more of your hard-earned money.



I am very pleased to host groups from the 12th District who come to visit our state Capitol. This session, I had the honor of welcoming the Wenatchee Pioneer Middle School Mariachi band to the Legislature.

Agriculture bills successful

We had several successes with farm-related bills. Here are three of particular interest:

Beekeepers:

Senate Bill 6468 gives tax breaks to the state's beekeepers and attempts to ease the economic impact of a nationwide epidemic that has left millions of bees dead.

Hay weigh:

House Bill 2923 allows for a USDA-approved scale to be used to weigh straw or hay for transport. The measure provides for a more efficient method of transporting these commodities on the state's public highways.

Lake Roosevelt drawdown:

Through Senate Bill 6874, an agreement was reached with the Spokane and Colville tribes for a slight drawdown of Lake Roosevelt. The resulting billions of gallons will help with drought relief, Odessa-area farmers struggling with a dwindling aquifer, as well as cities and fish.

Your tax money comes home!

You send a lot of your tax money to Olympia. It's nice when some of it can come home to help our local communities.

This year, I voted to approve legislation that will provide more than \$2.5 million in low- and no-interest loans for public works projects in Mansfield and near Grand Coulee.

House Bill 2437 provides the money through the taxpayer-supported Public Works Trust Fund. Under the bill that has been signed into law, the city of Mansfield will receive \$235,000 to upgrade its waste water treatment plant, and the Regional Board of Mayors will receive \$2.4 million for the Delano Transfer Station project near Grand Coulee.

Opportunities for next year

Sometimes it takes longer than one or two sessions to achieve our goals. Although I am disappointed the following bills did not pass the Legislature, we advanced the debate on a number of issues important to families in the 12th District, and set the scene for further movement next year.

- **College book expenses - HB 3047:** A measure I prime-sponsored that would have required college- and university-affiliated bookstores to provide a four-week advance notification of course material requirements. The measure would have allowed students time to shop for books online where prices may be more reasonable, saving them and their parents money. Passed the House. Died in the Senate.
- **Citizenship proof - HB 2930:** I introduced this measure to require applicants for a Washington state driver's license to provide proof, such as a birth certificate, to show they are United States citizens. The bill is intended to ensure that only people who can prove U.S. citizenship can vote. Under this legislation, applicants who could not produce proof of citizenship would still be allowed to receive a driver's license, but it would be stamped with the words "not valid for identification purposes." Died in House Transportation Committee.
- **Hunting mistakes - House Bill 2493:** Suppose you were hunting and accidentally shot a two-point buck in an area where three-point is the minimum. Do you remove the deer and hope no one finds out? Or do you report it to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and risk criminal prosecution? I prime-sponsored this measure to allow game officers the option of issuing a \$150 fine in lieu of larger criminal fines for unlawful trapping, use of dogs, hunting of wild birds, and unlawful second-degree hunting of big game and wild animals. That way, if an honest mistake is made, a person can come forward without fear of criminal prosecution.
- **Methow TV District public safety funding - House Bill 2337:** I introduced this measure at the request of the Methow Valley Communications District to allow television reception districts to use fees they already collect to construct, maintain and support police, fire, ambulance and other emergency services communications. The measure passed the House and a Senate committee. Unfortunately, time ran out in the session before the Senate could take final action.
- **Property tax relief:** I had hoped, following the November special session in which the 1 percent levy limit was restored, that the momentum for further property tax relief would continue into the 2008 session. Unfortunately, the majority party broke its promise to provide additional relief this session and blocked every one of our efforts to reduce your property taxes. I will keep fighting on your behalf for property tax relief!

I'm here to serve you!

I greatly appreciate the honor to serve as your state representative. I work for you throughout the year, not just when the Legislature is in session. If you have a question, comment or suggestion, please call my office in Olympia, write a letter, or e-mail me. Here's my contact information:

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